
Higher Education Committee

SB 5625

Brief Description: Regarding gender equity reporting.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Schoesler, Hewitt, Poulsen, McAuliffe and Delvin.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits higher education institutions to use a three-year rolling average in reporting athletic participation for purposes of gender equity rules.

Hearing Date: 3/17/05

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Article 31, section 1 of the Washington State Constitution requires all citizens, regardless of gender, to be treated equally. In 1983, female athletes and coaches of female athletes at Washington State University (WSU) filed a lawsuit alleging sex discrimination under the state Equal Rights Amendment and the Law Against Discrimination. The Whitman County Superior Court found that WSU had discriminated against its female athletes by creating "an entirely different sort of participation opportunity" for females as compared to males.

In 1989, the Legislature directed the higher education institutions to eliminate gender discrimination in academic programs, student employment, counseling, financial aid, recreational activities and intercollegiate athletics. Under that law, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) has adopted rules and guidelines to eliminate gender discrimination at higher education institutions. Rules include specified components in the areas in which gender discrimination is to be eliminated. For purposes of achieving gender equity in intercollegiate athletics, the proportion of female athletic participation must be within five percentage points of female enrollment in any particular year.

The HECB monitors institutional compliance with gender equity rules and reports every four years to the Governor and the higher education committees of the Legislature regarding institutional efforts to comply with the rules.

Summary of Bill:

Higher education institutions may use a three-year rolling average in determining the proportion of female and male athletic participants to female and male enrollments for purposes of compliance and monitoring of gender equity requirements

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.